

**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY-19
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in CT.

I am Deborah Ullman CEO of YWCA Hartford Region. I live in West Hartford. YWCA provides programs throughout Hartford County and provides emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing in Hartford.

Connecticut is making progress to end homelessness – saving lives and saving public dollars. Preserving state investments will allow us to maintain progress.

- We recognize that Connecticut is in a place where tough choices have to be made to our state budget.
- Governor Malloy and our legislative leaders have long understood and supported the importance of ending homelessness in our state in both fiscal and human terms.
- The current budget proposal preserves funding for critical housing and homelessness services and supports, including:
 - **The DOH Housing/Homeless Services line item, \$73.7 million in FY 18 and \$78.3 million in FY 19**, for frontline housing/homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters, and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), which are essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly to permanent housing. The Rental Assistance Program funds the rental subsidies which make Supportive Housing possible. Supportive Housing continues to be the most effective housing model to assist people experiencing chronic homelessness and is proven to cut public system costs by up to 70%.
 - The Homeless Youth line item: Youth outreach services, crisis housing for youth, and housing services and supports are essential services to transition youth from crisis to stability.
- Investments are working: numbers of those experiencing homelessness are going down year after year. Despite our progress with veterans and chronically homeless, there is still much to do.

- Connecticut was the first state in the nation recognized by the federal government for ending chronic homelessness among Veterans; and one of only three states to end all homelessness among veterans.
- The HUD 2015 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report showed a drop of nearly 50 % in chronic homelessness between 2014 and 2015 Connecticut- the largest reduction in any state. In December 2016, CT matched all chronically homeless individuals to a housing resource.
- The implementation of the Coordinated Access System (CAN) over the last two years has assured that providers of services to the homeless are making best use of our limited resources and serving our most vulnerable citizens. A four year resident of Soromundi Commons came to my office yesterday to tell me that she was moving out on Saturday. She is now stable and can live on her own. She had gotten a Housing Choice voucher to move down the street into a new apartment. The apartment that she is leaving will go to another individual experiencing homelessness and provide her/him with case management and other services so that they too can maintain stable housing.
- Very limited shelter resources for single women in the Hartford area, and the challenges for homeless single women in finding affordable housing mean that currently scores of women are forced to make dangerous choices because there are no shelter beds for them. They put themselves at risk of violence, abuse and sexual trauma so that they have a place to sleep and food to it. We have been operating at between 8% and 25% above contracted levels, and just this week have decided to work to increase our capacity another 25% during these cold winter months, despite no additional funding being available. That only puts a dent in the problem. We must continue to fund emergency shelter and then fund the housing and support services so We need you to maintain current funding levels
- Cuts to these services would risk reversing the substantial progress we have made to end chronic homelessness – taking us the wrong direction, and imposing new costs on our communities.
- Homelessness is an unacceptable condition for any Connecticut resident, and an expensive public policy problem. Investments in frontline homeless services, permanent supportive housing, and support services save public resources and help families and individuals transition to housing, stability, and hope.
- Thank you for reading my testimony and thank you for your support to efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.